THE CASE OF THE Inhabitants of the Cities OF *London & Weſtminſter*,

And of the

Pariſhes and Places within the Bills of Mortality, with reſpect to the Laws now in Force for preventing Miſchiefs that may happen by FIRE.

Humbly offer'd to the Conſideration of the

PARLIAMENT of *GREAT BRITAIN*.

LONDON:

Printed by *H. MEERE*, at the *Black Fryer* in *Black Fryers*. 1718.

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(Price 6 d.)

THE CASE OF THE Inhabitants of the Cities OF *London*, *Westminster*, &c.

NOtwithstanding the good and wholesome Laws made to prevent Mischiefs by Fire, and the dreadful Examples of many Thousand of Families,

which, within a few Years laſt paſt, have been entirely ruin'd by Calamities of this Kind, ſome having loſt their Lives, others being maim'd and diſabled, and vaſt Numbers, from a competent and perhaps flouriſhing Condition of Life having been reduc'd to Want and Beggary: And notwithſtanding ſeveral uſeful and neceſſary *Societies* have been form'd and erected, for Inſuring Houſes and Goods againſt Loſs by Fire, and thereby deſigning and in ſome Meaſure repairing the Damage done to private Sufferers, out of a Common Stock and Fund depoſited in thoſe OFFICES; the Watermen employ'd by them being alſo found upon Trial to be extreamly diligent and ſerviceable in extinguiſhing of Fires, under ſuch good Regulations and Orders as

as by the ſaid *Officers* have been made and provided; yet ſtill it appears, by ſad and woful Experience, that many Fires have lately happen'd within theſe two great and populous Cities, which have ſpread far, and done very great Damage, before they could be extinguiſh'd; whereby there is but too much Reaſon given to believe, either that the Laws, already made for this Purpoſe, are in themſelves defective, or elſe that the Perſons appointed to put them in Execution, have been remiſs in their Duty; there being good Grounds to ſuſpect, that too many have declin'd giving their Aſſiſtance in Caſes of this Nature, as the Law directs they ſhould do, out of a Perſwaſion that their Neighbours could be no great Sufferers by Fire, becauſe the *Inſurance-*

Offices

Offices were oblig'd to make good the Damage, provided they took Care to insure in one or other of those Offices. And however that be in Fact, it is notorious, that there there are great Deficiencies in one or other, if not in both these Kinds; which will appear to be undeniably certain and evident, if an impartial Enquiry be made into the following Particulars, *Viz.*

By one Act of Parliament in the 6th, and another in the 7th Year of her late Majesty, it is enacted, That the Church-wardens of every Parish within the Liberties of *London* and *Westminster*, and Bills of Mortality, shall place and fix upon the Mains and Pipes of any Water-works such and so many Stop-Blocks of Wood, with a Two-Inch Plug, or such and so many Fire-

Cocks

Cocks, to go into each Main or Pipe, at ſuch Diſtances in each Street as the ſaid Church-wardens ſhall direct: They are likewiſe requir'd to affix a Mark, or written Notice of a Fire-Plug, upon or in the Front of the Houſe or Houſes, overagainſt the Places where the Stop-Blocks or Fire-Cocks lye, and to keep an Inſtrument in ſuch Houſe for opening the Plug, and a Key for the Stop-Cocks, as alſo a Pipe for the Water to come thereout, of the ſame Size with the Plug or Fire-Cock, whereby the Water may be convey'd clean into the Engine, without Loſs, Lett, or Delay.

Theſe Proviſions were no doubt very well intended, and are in themſelves good and uſeful; but they would be much more ſo, if Care

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were taken to aſcertain the Size and Make of theſe Plugs, Cocks, and Pipes, in a more exact Manner, and to oblige the Church-wardens to place them at ſome particular ſettled Diſtance from each other, ſo that they might eaſily be found, and preſently ſet a working, upon the firſt Breaking-out of any Fire: For it is notorious, that there is no Plug or Fire-Cock in ſome ſtreets; and in others they are plac'd at ſuch uncertain Diſtances, and ſo obſcurely, and are ſo often remov'd and alter'd, that they are either not to be found, or it is ſo long before they are found, that in the mean Time the Flames get a-head, and do great Damage, before Water can be provided to ſupply the Engines. And for this there is at preſent no Redreſs; becauſe the Power of the Church-wardens is in this

this ſo material a Caſe perfectly diſcretionary. Beſides, tho' the Plugs may be of a Two-Inch Size in ſome one Part of them, yet they are not large enough to receive a Fire-Cock that ſhall have two Inches clear Water-Way; ſo that they will not deliver the Water faſt enough to ſupply a large double-barrel'd Engine, that plays with a continual Stream, (ſuch as may be ſeen at the Engine-Makers at *Mill-Bank*, *Weſtminſter*.) And the Inſtruments proper for the opening of the Block and drawing out the Plug are frequently out of Order, or not to be found, upon any ſudden Emergence, at the Breaking-out of a Fire: And in either of theſe Caſes it ſeems a Hardſhip to ſue the Penalty upon the Church-wardens, becauſe they are oblig'd to truſt to the Skill and Fidelity of

ſuch Workmen, as are commonly employ'd to make the Plugs and Cocks, and to the Care of thoſe Perſons at whoſe Houſe the Inſtruments for the opening the Block, and drawing the Plug, are, by this Act, order'd to be depoſited.

So that there ſeems to be good Reaſon for laying this Penalty upon other Perſons beſides the Church-wardens, whenever there ſhall be a Default in theſe Particulars; every ſuch Default being attended with very fatal miſchievous Conſequences.

Moſt of theſe Inconveniencies might be prevented, if every Pariſh were oblig'd to provide ſo many Cocks of Braſs, and Augers to fit them, (ſuch as may be ſeen at the Place aforeſaid) and Liberty given

given to place them in the Mains or Pipes of any Water-Works near to the Place where the Fire is.

By theſe two Statutes it is likewiſe farther enacted, *That every Pariſh ſhall have and keep in good Repair one large Engine, and one Hand-Engine, to throw out Water for the extinguiſhing of Fires.*

And by an Order of the Veſtry every Pariſh, in Proportion to its Largeneſs, is empower'd to provide more than one Engine of each Sort; and alſo to keep and maintain one leathern Pipe and Socket, in every Pariſh, of the ſame Size with the Plug, or Fire-Cock, to the Intent they may be always ready to fit on, in order to work in conveying the Water into the

Engine with Diſpatch and Expedition.

Theſe are alſo good and wholſome Proviſions, if they were well purſu'd and duly executed: But moſt of the Engines, with which the ſeveral Pariſhes of *London* and *Weſtminſter* are at preſent ſupply'd, appear to be ſo far unfit for the Service they are employ'd in, that they may be more properly call'd *Squirts* than *Engines*; becauſe they do not play with a continual Stream, neither have they any leathern Pipe fix'd to them, whereby to throw the Water on the Fire when it firſt breaks out, and rages for ſome Time in the Inſide of an Houſe, or Back-part of any Building; but the Men that work the Engines, muſt ſtay till the Fire forces its Way to the Outſide, or Front of a Street,

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(that is, till it has got a-head, and conſum'd one or more Houſes) before they can throw on Water to extinguiſh it.

To prevent theſe Inconveniencies, it ſeems highly reaſonable, that for the future no Pariſh-Engine ſhould be admitted as ſuch within the Meaning of the Act, 'till it be try'd and approv'd by ſuch Perſons as ſhall be thought proper.

And it is highly to be wiſh'd, that every Pariſh were oblig'd to provide and keep a certain Length of Pipe, or Hoſe of Leather, with Screws divided into equal Parts, all being fitted to each other; and the Fire-Cock, the Sockets, or Hook, and their Screws, to be made alike, and of the ſame Dimenſions,

menſions, in all Pariſhes. And farther, That every Pariſh ſhould be oblig'd to have a certain Number of Lengths of leathern Pipe, to ſcrew on to the upright Pipe of each Engine, with Screws for the Branch and for each Length of Pipe, ſo contriv'd, as to fit each other upon the firſt Tryal; whereby the Engines may immediately begin to play, without Loſs of Time, or Trouble in putting the ſeveral Parts of it together: For as the Caſe is at preſent, the ſeveral Pariſh-Engines, and the Inſtruments belonging to them, are ſo different from each other, and ſo unlike in their Make and Dimenſions, that whenever a Fire happens, not above three or four of them can be put into a Condition of playing at a time; and if any one of them is diſabled by an Accident,

dent, or any one Part wanting or out of Order, there is no ſupplying of the Defect, at leaſt not without great Trouble and Loſs of Time; but ſuch Engine is preſently diſmiſs'd and ſent away, as utterly uſeleſs and unſerviceable, and perhaps continues and is laid up in that State for a long Time after, without any Care had for repairing it.

Laſtly. It is farther enacted by the Statutes abovemention'd, *That upon the Breaking-out of any Fire, the Conſtables and Beadles ſhall, upon Notice, repair to it, with their Staves and Badges of Authority; and ſhall there aſſiſt in extinguiſhing ſuch Fire, cauſing People to work at the Engines, helping to remove Goods, and apprehend ſuch as come to ſteal and purloin from the Inhabitants.*

This

This Clauſe is highly neceſſary, and of admirable Uſe and Service to prevent Damages by Fire: But it is capable of very conſiderable Improvements, no leſs conducive to the ſame good Ends and Purpoſe; for upon the Breaking-out of any Fire, there is always ſuch a Crowd and Preſs in the Street where ſuch Fire happens, that the Engines cannot be brought to it without great Difficulty, neither is there Room to play them in; and the poor Sufferers are very much obſtructed in removing their Goods; the proper Perſons to direct and give Orders cannot be heard or attended to; and upon the Blowing-up of any Houſe, or Fall of any ruinated Buildings, there is frequently a great deal of Miſchief done among ſuch vaſt Numbers of

uſeleſs

uſeleſs and unneceſſary By-ſtanders. Now to prevent theſe Evils and Inconveniencies, it would be of great Service to the Publick, that the Conſtables and Beadles might be aſſiſted by a Party of the Militia, to be rais'd upon this Occaſion, and were authoriz'd and empower'd to guard the Avenues or Paſſes to the Street where the Fire is, eſpecially if it ſhould happen in ſome cloſe or narrow Place; and to keep off all Women, Children, and other Perſons, who are unfit for Work or Service upon theſe Occaſions; which Method is ſtrictly obſerv'd in other Countries: For ſuch Throngs of Women and Children are a conſiderable Obſtruction to the ſpeedy Extinguiſhing of Fires; they occaſion great Tumults and Diſorders, incommode the free Playing of the

Engines, divert and take off the Men from working at the Fire, and frequently expose themselves and others to great Dangers and Mischiefs, when at the same Time they can do no manner of Good by their Presence.

A due Consideration of the foregoing Particulars, and the applying of the proper Remedy in each Case, would contribute very much to the amending and enforcing of the Laws now in Being, for preventing Mischiefs that may happen by Fire, and to the quickening those Persons in their Duty, who are oblig'd to put them in Execution; whereby the two great and populous Cities of *London* and *Westminster* might be much better secur'd than at present they are from Calamities of this Kind, which in themselves are most sad

and

and deplorable: It being found to be true by Experience and common Obſervation, that, generally ſpeaking, more than one half of the Damage done by Fire, is juſtly to be imputed to the Neglect of Pariſh-Officers, in not providing proper Engines and other Inſtruments to be employ'd in this Service, and to the great Diſorders and tumultuous Crowds of Multitudes of all Sorts of People, who never fail to get together upon theſe Occaſions.

What farther Regulations are neceſſary, beſides theſe already mention'd, or in what Manner, and under what Penalties and Reſtriction the Grievance here complain'd of is moſt proper to be redreſs'd, muſt with all due Humility be ſubmitted to the Honour, Wiſdom, and Juſtice of the Parliament of *Great Britain*.

F I N I S.

and deplorable: It being found to be true by Experience and common Observation, that, generally speaking, more than one half of the Damage done by Fire, is justly to be imputed to the Neglect of Parish-Officers, in not providing proper Engines and other Instruments to be employ'd in this Service, and to the great Disorders and tumultuous Crowds of Multitudes of all Sorts of People, who never fail to get together upon these Occasions.

What further Regulations are necessary, besides those already mentioned, or in what Manner, and under what Penalties and Restriction the Grievance here complain'd of is most proper to be redress'd, must with all due Humility be submitted to the Honour, Wisdom, and Justice of the Parliament of Great Britain.

FINIS.